

The MENTAL HEALTH LEGAL ADVISORS COMMITTEE presents:

CONVENTIONAL AND UNCONVENTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF PERSONS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

Friday, October 26, 2007

Western New England College School of Law, Springfield

8:00 REGISTRATION AND BREAKFAST

8:30 WELCOME

8:45 **MEDICATIONS IN MENTAL HEALTH: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY**

This talk will examine the risks and benefits of psychiatric medications in children and adults. We will also explore the broader social and medical factors that influence the patterns of use, overuse, and under use of medications. Finally, we will discuss the appropriate role for alternative treatment modalities such as nutrition.

Bruce I. Goderez, M.D., Integrative Psychiatry

10:30 **DECONSTRUCTING MENTAL HEALTH EVALUATIONS: A GUIDE FOR ATTORNEYS**

This session will assist attorneys in making sense of expert reports from mental health professionals by becoming knowledgeable consumers of psychological/psychiatric reports. Specific topics will include: interpreting test scores, basic statistical concepts made easy, signs of confirmatory bias, psychological testing and Daubert, and effective cross examination of mental health experts

Eric G. Mart, Ph.D., ABPP (Forensic), Clinical Director, Highland Psychological Services

12:00 **HEARING YOUR CLIENT'S VOICE: EXPERIENCE OF CONSUMERS INVOLVED IN THE SYSTEM**

From the perspective of mental health consumers/psychiatric survivors this presentation will illustrate the barriers that prevent individuals in the mental health system from exercising and protecting their legal rights. The talk will focus on how to bridge the gap between attorneys and their clients to improve the quality of representation of individuals in the mental health system.

Abigail Adams, Advocacy Coordinator, Recovery Learning Community

Dianne Dragon, Organizer and Support Group Facilitator, Freedom Center

1:00 LUNCH (AVAILABLE ON YOUR OWN AT THE CAFETERIA)

2:00 **LEGAL STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH EXPERTS**

Experienced attorneys will discuss working with experts on both sides of a case to maximize success on behalf of your client. They will cover statutory basis and protocol for securing state funds for independents, who to retain as experts and reasons why, differing approaches to treatment plans in probate v. commitment cases, competency issues in adult guardianships and use of experts as consultants, and tips for successful cross examination.

Lisa van Gordon d'Errico, J.D. Solo Practitioner

Joan Katz, J.D. Solo Practitioner

3:30 **VIEWS FROM THE BENCH**

This panel of judges from the Western Massachusetts area will discuss areas of interest to both mental health and children and family law attorneys practicing in the Juvenile, District, and Probate and Family Courts. Specifically, discussion will focus on ways in which attorneys can best present and combat evidence on mental health by experts and will address some of the novel approaches presented earlier in the day.

Hon. Charles S. Belsky, Associate Justice, Hampden Juvenile Court

Honorable W. Michael Ryan, Associate Justice, Northampton District Court

Probate and Family Court Department Judge - TBA

Robin Stolk, J.D., Attorney in Charge, Children and Family Law Program, Springfield Office,
Committee for Public Counsel Services